

Circular Letter No. 111
January 22, 1929.

VERB TESTS

GOVERNMENT OF PORTO RICO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
SAN JUAN

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Subject: VERB TESTS

To the Supervisors of Schools, High School Principals
and Teachers of High School English:

As every one admits who has tried learning a second language, the mastery of verbs is the backbone of the work. To have to halt and ponder each verb that appears in a sentence cripples disastrously one's use of a language; ease and skill come only with the confidence derived from a perfect knowledge of verbs. The mastery of verbs is not an easy matter nor does it come in a single day; the nature of the practice necessary to acquire skill and accuracy in the use of verbs demands carefully thought-out plans and the conscientious execution of these. Students do not learn verbs unless there are specially prepared exercises and drills; teaching of verbs has its own technique.

I. ATTITUDE OF THE TEACHER TOWARD TEACHING VERBS. The most important element in this work is the attitude of the teacher toward the work and the corresponding response awakened in the pupil. The attitude of the English teacher in regard to verbs should be exactly that of the mathematics teacher toward the multiplication tables. The mathematics teacher never questions that the multiplication tables can be learned; there are a certain number of tables to be learned in each grade, and all the world expects that particular bit of work to be completed each year. Nobody says that the multiplication tables do not matter, that the student knows the other phases of his work and can get along without the multiplication tables, or that the multiplication tables ~~are too difficult to be~~ learned any way. Instead of this the mathematics teacher attacks his problem with confidence and the conviction of the necessity of the achievement of the task and with an understanding of the nature of the problem and a knowledge of how to accomplish it. The English teacher who succeeds in teaching verbs has the same attitude. Once that we are convinced of the necessity of a student's mastering each year a given portion of the conjugation of the verb and of the possibility of

this achievement, we may then approach the matter with confidence and devise the necessary methods to enable the student to accomplish this. The student will then understand our attitude and will react accordingly; if we are prepared to give him the necessary help he will measure up to our expectations.

II. THE STUDENT'S PART. The attitude of the English teacher should be such as to impress upon the student the necessity and possibility of perfection in the field defined for him; the teacher should have the student thoroughly understand what is expected of him and to demand of him that he meet the required standard. The student should understand that the teacher is giving him the necessary help to meet the standard; then if he fails to do his share, he is responsible for the consequences.

III. NEED OF A COMMON STANDARD FOR JUDGING WORK OF A STUDENT. It is planned to conduct this year a series of tests to establish a standard to be achieved by each student in each year's work. In order to establish this standard it will be necessary to compile the results of tests which will be given to determine what represents a fair standard for each grade. The need for such a standard is obvious; teachers who have no common means for ascertaining the standard to be adhered to very naturally will find themselves puzzled when they face a set of papers and have to determine the line which divides acceptable work from work not acceptable. The lack of knowing where to draw the line causes the situation with which every teacher is familiar: the uneven quality of work done by students promoted to the same grade. It is a very common thing to hear a teacher describe the difficulties which must be faced due to the varying degrees of preparation shown by the students of the same class. What has happened, of course, is that each teacher has had to establish for herself a standard to determine what constitutes passing work, and the result is that there exists about as many standards as there are teachers. No one is to blame for this, but it is to be hoped that this year we shall be able to take the first step in establishing a standard. As indicated at the beginning of this bulletin, the point at which we shall begin is on verbs.

IV. TWO PHASES OF TEACHING OF VERBS. The study of verbs is comprised of exercises in the conjugation of verbs and the use of them in oral and written composition. Experience has shown that sometimes students learn to write out the conjugation of a verb but are unable to apply this knowledge in composition work. This fact in no wise condemns the exercises devoted to learning to write out the conjugations, but instead points out that the ultimate step in the mastery of verbs,

their use in composition work, has not been achieved. Certainly the end to be achieved in the study of verbs is not solely the ability to write out conjugations of verbs; such exercises constitute only the first step but as such they must be perfected. Drawing again a parallel from the mathematics teacher's work, we see that he is not satisfied merely by having the students acquire the ability to write out the multiplication tables but aims to have them use the tables accurately in solving the problems. The tables are first learned perfectly and then applied in the problems. So it is with verbs.

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This letter containing the explanation of the system to be used for verb tests and the method of analyzing results was prepared early in the year before the hurricane; the interruptions following thereto are responsible for its delay.

Attention: Teachers of freshman,
sophomore, and junior
classes.

In view of the present situation the plan presented herein is strongly recommended to teachers of freshman, sophomore, and junior classes but is not required inasmuch as we have not been able to have prepared the necessary supplied which were originally intended to be provided. We trust that you will avail yourselves of the profit to be derived from accomplishing what you can of the plan. Perhaps the students could each prepare on the typewriter or in long hand the blanks which he would need for himself, the number of which is not very great.

Attention: Teachers of senior classes.

The teachers of senior classes are required to give the first 25 tests in the attached list of tests scheduled for seniors.

Give the tests at the rate of 2 or 3 a week.

We cannot supply you with the necessary copies of FORMS 1, 2, and 3. If you find that you can do so, have the students make their own copies or get them mimeographed where; otherwise, omit this phase of the work.

Each of the 25 tests requires one report which is to be made on FORM 4, 5, or 6. Sufficient copies for the reports and for a duplicate of each, which is to be kept by the teacher,

are being sent! On each blank give the total results found in all the senior classes for the one test on which the report is made.

The number of reports to be made on each of the FORMS 4, 5, 6 are as follows:

FORM 4 - 11 reports
FORM 5 - 8 reports
FORM 6 - 6 reports

As soon as the second test is completed, mail the 2 reports to the Department. As soon as the next 7 tests are given, which complete the tests in the indicative, mail them to the Department. Mail the remaining tests not later than May 10.

IMPORTANT

Each teacher is being sent 30 copies of the pamphlet "Conjugation of the Model Verb To Take." These pamphlets are to be used in the classroom in connection with the study of verbs. Have the students take good care of the pamphlets. At the end of the year return them to the principal with the other books belonging to the school. Models of the synopses as called for in these tests will be found in the back of the pamphlet.

V. PARTS OF THE CONJUGATION OF THE VERB TO BE PERFECTLY MASTERED EACH YEAR. (This letter was prepared in September 1928 and use explained heretofore was delayed. Inasmuch as the time remaining at our disposal is much shorter than that contemplated, we shall not be able to adhere to the 100% standard explained in this section. But it is trusted that the 100% standard will be approached as closely as possible.) For the reasons mentioned heretofore in this letter, the necessity for having a standard determining the exact amount to be accomplished by a student in each grade is apparent. Therefore, the outline of verb study listed below has been adopted; the part of the conjugation assigned to each year must be absolutely mastered. The student must make a grade of 100% on the work of his class before he is considered eligible for the next year's work; thus it is seen that in the matter of verbs the standard is different to that in the other parts of the course for English. This high standard is set because we believe that if the teacher and pupil carry out the plan of study outlined herein, it will be possible to achieve this standard. In the conjugation of a verb there

are no substitutes that are "just as good"; either the student knows the verb or he does not; no such thing as knowing partially a certain verb form is to be considered. To draw a parallel - if six times nine is fifty-four, what kind of an answer would the student have who gets the answer partially correct?

The statements made heretofore that the student must make a grade of 100% means that that mark must be made before the end of the term; in other words, the student may achieve that mark even on the last day of the term, thereby winning his promotion, or he may make 100% on the first day and continue so on throughout his course. Those students who do fail to achieve the 100% will perhaps ask for extra tests to be given them so that they may finally succeed; it is up to the discretion of the teacher to work out a system for giving students more tests than called for in the schedule listed below if the students want them. The teacher may give individual aid to the students as the course progresses, assisting each to make the required mark or at stated intervals he may give tests for those who have fallen below the standard. If he likes he may give at the end of the term a final test for those who have failed to make the required grade, provided that this final test includes all the parts of the verb included in the course. The plan in general is that the student must be given every chance to make the required standard and then to hold it.

So that the teacher may be able to tell from his record book what is the standing of a student, he should indicate at the foot of each column in which is recorded a grade for a test the number of that test as listed in the schedule for tests; or if he prefers he might indicate by notes the verb, person, voice, and mode of the verb used in the test. The purpose of this is that the teacher by a glance at his record book will be able to tell where the students are having difficulties and be able to check the student's individual record and have him repeat each test until he makes 100%.

If at any time an entire class masters all the portion of the conjugation assigned for that year, it may advance to the study of the portion for the next year.

Division of Conjugation of Verb Showing Part to Be Mastered in Each Year's Work.

Freshman: Indicative mode, acting voice
Imperative
Special drill on indicative mode, active voice
of do, have, be

Sophomore: Review of work of preceding year
Indicative mode, passive voice
Infinitives
Special drill on indicative mode, active and passive
of do, have, be

Junior and Senior: Review of work of preceding year
Subjunctive and potential modes, active and
passive voices
Participles
Special drill on subjunctive and potential
modes, active and passive voices of
do, have, be

VI. GRADING THE PAPERS. Since perfection is the only satisfactory mark, the usual method of giving a grade by letters as B, C, etc., or by figures as 85, 75, etc., cannot be used because they give the impression that the student has made a satisfactory mark. Therefore the following plan shall be used: a record shall be kept of the numbers of errors in each paper. If a student has no errors, he receives a 0, which becomes the coveted mark; if he has two mistakes, his grade is 2, and so on. The goal to be desired is a series of 0's.

If a student makes a mistake in one part of a verb form, the entire item is counted wrong. Thus, for example, in the third persons, singular, indicative, present perfect progressive, active, the form is he has been giving. If the student writes he have been giving, the entire item is counted wrong. For scoring each item, (that is, the verb form for a certain person, voice, number, mode) counts one. The total number of errors possible on a test is the same as the total number of items in the test.

VII. FORMS FOR VERB TESTS AND REPORTS. Teaching verbs is a matter of drill, and everybody knows that in order to conduct drills the mechanism for carrying out the plan must be designed to expedite the matter as much as possible in order to reduce to a minimum the labor attached to the drills; for drills to accomplish much they must be repeated frequently, and therefore if there is not a system for conducting them that will enable one to record and check his results with as little labor as possible the drills become very burdensome. And obviously, results of drills must be checked; other wise no one will know what is being accomplished.

Therefore, with a desire to introduce as much simplicity and ease as possible into the verb work for this year and to reduce the record keeping to a smooth basis, the following forms have been devised.

FORM I. THE VERB TEST. The verb tests have been worked out on a basis of synopses. This method was chosen because of the psychological value of such a test in preference to a test that involves the use of all the persons of the verb in one test. If we consider the mental process of a student when he is searching for the right form of a verb, we find that the first thing to be fixed in his mind is the person he wants; he knows immediately if he wants he, we, etc.; then the search comes for the verb forms. If he has practised the conjugation of a verb, writing all the forms used for each person, it becomes easier for him to bring to mind which of the forms for the desired person he wants; whereas, if he has studied all the persons together his task is magnified.

In FORM I the blank for Class should be filled in showing the classification of the student; for example, English I, 1st Hour. The blank for Mark shows the number of mistakes made on that test and is filled in with a number, as 1 or 5, etc.

The names of the tenses are not printed on this form because the student should know these names well enough to write them without such assistance.

The teacher may use whatever method he sees fit for getting these tests graded; but when they are returned to the class the students must enter in their personal record sheet the results shown on their papers.

One system for getting the tests graded which might be fairly successful is as follows. After the teacher has become familiar with the standing of the students of his classes, he may have the best students sit in the front desks; the verb tests may be passed to the front of the room and be graded by these students and then given to the teacher, the results to be recorded on the analytical report, FORMS 4, 5, or 6. The one thing to be remembered by the teacher is that he must devise methods that he feels will give accurate results and that he must keep personally in touch with it enough to know the work the students are doing.

FORMS 2 and 3. STUDENT'S INDIVIDUAL RECORD OF ERRORS IN VERB TESTS. The teacher who has had experience grading papers knows that in order to make effectual the work that he has done in marking the errors of the papers he must have some method for focusing the attention of the student on these corrections and have him profit thereby. Unless the student is forced to take cognizance of his errors and to take serious steps to correct them, the work of the teacher in grading his papers is wasted; if the student immediately

discards his test paper on receiving it and promptly forgets everything on it, the test has been of no value. FORMS 2 and 3 have been designed to meet this need. FORM 2 is for recording mistakes in the tests on the indicative, active and passive. FORM 3 is for the subjunctive and potential, active and passive.

Each student should keep in his notebook a copy of FORM 2 or 3, or of both if he needs them. When his verb tests are returned to him he should record on this sheet the errors he has made; on these sheets there is a blank space for each form of the verb. For each mistake the student makes in each part of the verb he should draw a small line in that blank space, thus / . When he comes to the fifth mistake to be recorded in that space he may cross back over the others thus: / / / / . By making these lines short, he will be able to get in a double set, thus making a total of ten errors in one part of the verb; that means that he has taken ten tests at least, and it is certain time for serious action. If such necessity should arise, he may be given a new record sheet; but when he is given a second sheet he should be thoroughly reminded of the fact that he is in a precarious position.

The recording of these errors is entirely the work of the student, and it depends upon the teacher to get him to be accurate in making the entries. It remains for the teacher to impress upon the student the advantage to him of keeping for himself a history sheet of his progress. As a matter of fact where this plan has been tried the students take considerable pride in this sheet and have made a conscientious effort to keep it accurate; students have often been heard comparing notes on their respective records. It provides a stimulus for the students. In the teacher's grade book there is, of course, a record of the students' grades; from these grades some one who has time for it might prepare a public chart to be placed on the bulletin board of the classroom showing the curve established by the grades of each student. These curves may be plotted with red ink; they show very well whether the student is going up or down in his work. The interest in such records should be centered on each student's record as revealing his own efforts to improve his own work, and not as a matter of comparison with other students.

Attached hereto is a list of the series of tests to be given in each class; toward the end of the list are the tests on the verbs, have, do, be; for each one of these verbs the student should be given a separate record sheet. The reason for this is that these verbs are so important that it is advisable that the student keep a separate record for each

in order to be able to see for himself exactly what is his knowledge of these verbs.

FORMS 4, 5, 6. ANALYTICAL REPORT ON ERRORS IN VERB TESTS. These reports are to be filled out by the teacher. Each of FORMS 4, 5, 6 is for recording the numbers of errors made in a single set of test papers of all the classes in each year's work. FORM 4 is for the indicative, active and passive. FORM 5 is for the subjunctive, active and passive. FORM 6 is for the potential active and passive.

The blanks that are marked solid with the dashes show the parts of the verb that occur in each form of the verb; where the dots occur there is no form of the verb for that voice or mode. In the column for the pronouns the only mistake that could occur is in case the student might not write the person called for in the test; for example, if the test is announced for the third person and instead the student writes it for the first person, he has made a mistake in each pronoun, thereby cancelling the total work and receiving the maximum number of mistakes. It is necessary to take this attitude in this matter, for sometimes students are tempted to substitute a conjugation that they know well when they do not feel very well prepared to take the test announced.

These reports are to be mailed by the teachers of senior English to the Department following the second, eleventh, and twenty-fifth tests listed in the schedule attached hereto. The teacher keeps a duplicate of the report mailed to the Department. Making out this report affords the teacher an accurate understanding of the situation in his classes in regard to verbs. The report affords a comprehensive summary of the situation and enables the teacher to direct his attention where it is most needed in correcting verbs. The purpose of this report is to determine where the greatest difficulty for the students lies and to save lost effort in teaching. In preparing this report, the teacher, or some student in whom the teacher has absolute confidence, takes each paper and enters a mark on the analytical report in the appropriate blank for each error. For example, in the column for the auxiliary verb do would be entered a check mark if a student had written, for example, they does eat for they do eat. On these analytical reports the blanks that are marked with the dashes indicate the forms of verb in that particular part of the conjugation. For entering the errors on this sheet a mark of this sort, /, may be entered for each error; then when the fifth error is found the four marks may be checked thus, ||||. If the marks are made with short lines

two rows may be entered in each column.

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS SUGGESTIONS. If the teacher considers it desirable he might for the first two or three tests have written on the board the names of the tenses in the order in which they come; after that the students should have them in mind so well that they should not be written on the board.

Students in writing out the conjugation of a verb should not use dittoes. The reason for this is obvious; if the student in writing a theme finds that he needs the third person singular, past perfect, progressive, active of do, he will most likely be at something of a loss to recall the form if he has been accustomed to using dittoes; perhaps all that he will be able to recall is the mental picture of some dittoes.

It should be insisted that the student use correctly shall and will; the substitution of one for the other should not be permitted. On tests shall should be used with the first person and will with the second and third.

The principal parts of irregular verbs should be studied and mastered in the first and second years of high school.

A very good practice which has proved to be very helpful is to have the students underscore all the verbs in the compositions and in examinations that have the answers in the form of full answers. To follow this practice emphasizes in the mind of the student the verb forms and makes him more careful.

The attached schedule showing the tests to be given in each year's work does not mean, of course, that the teacher will correct errors in only the parts of the verb shown in the tests. All verb errors occurring in the student's themes, examinations and oral work should be corrected.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) JUAN B. HUYKE,
Commissioner of Education.

VD/af.

(Encl. C. L. 111, 1928-29.)
VERB TESTS TO BE GIVEN

FRESHMAN

Indicative Active

Test				
1.	1st.	per.	sing.	take
2.	1st.	per.	sing.	see
3.	1st.	per.	sing.	give
4.	1st.	per.	pl.	take
5.	1st.	per.	pl.	see
6.	1st.	per.	pl.	give
7.	2nd.	per.	sing.	take
8.	2nd.	per.	sing.	see
9.	2nd.	per.	sing.	give
10.	3rd.	per.	sing.	take
11.	3rd.	per.	sing.	see
12.	3rd.	per.	sing.	give
13.	3rd.	per.	pl.	take
14.	3rd.	per.	pl.	see
15.	3rd.	per.	pl.	give

Test					To Have
16.	1st.	per.	sing.		
17.	2nd.	per.	sing.		
18.	3rd.	per.	sing.		
19.	1st.	per.	pl.		
20.	3rd.	per.	pl.		
					To Do
21.	1st.	per.	sing.		
22.	2nd.	per.	sing.		
23.	3rd.	per.	sing.		
24.	1st.	per.	pl.		
25.	3rd.	per.	pl.		
					To Be (Passive)
26.	1st.	per.	sing.		

SOPHOMORE

Indicative

Test					Active
1.	1st.	per.	sing.	take	
2.	1st.	per.	sing.	see	
3.	2nd.	per.	sing.	see	
4.	2nd.	per.	sing.	give	
5.	3rd.	per.	sing.	give	
6.	3rd.	per.	sing.	see	
7.	1st.	per.	pl.	take	
8.	3rd.	per.	pl.	see	
9.	3rd.	per.	pl.	give	
					Passive
10.	1st.	per.	sing.	take	
11.	1st.	per.	sing.	see	
12.	2nd.	per.	sing.	see	
13.	2nd.	per.	sing.	give	
14.	3rd.	per.	sing.	give	
15.	3rd.	per.	sing.	see	
16.	1st.	per.	pl.	take	
17.	3rd.	per.	pl.	see	
18.	3rd.	per.	pl.	give	

					To Have	
						Passive
19.	1st.	per.	sing.			24. 3rd. per. sin.
20.	2nd.	per.	sing.			25. 3rd. per. pl.
21.	3rd.	per.	sing.			
22.	1st.	per.	pl.			
23.	3rd.	per.	pl.			
					To Do	
						Passive
26.	1st.	per.	sing.			31. 3rd. per. sing.
27.	2nd.	per.	sing.			32. 3rd. per. pl.
28.	3rd.	per.	sing.			
29.	1st.	per.	pl.			
30.	3rd.	per.	pl.			
					To Be	
						Passive
						33. 1st. per. sing.
						34. 2nd. per. sing.
						35. 3rd. per. sing.
						36. 1st. per. pl.
						37. 3rd. per. pl.

(Encl. C. L. 111, 1928-29)
VERB TESTS TO BE GIVEN (Cont'd.)

JUNIOR AND SENIOR

Indicative

Test

1. 2nd. per. pl. active see
2. 3rd. per. sing. active see
3. 1st. per. sing. passive see
4. 3rd. per. pl. passive see

To Have

5. 1st. per. sing. active
6. 3rd. per. sing. active
7. 3rd. per. pl. passive

To Do

8. 3rd. per. sing. active
9. 3rd. per. pl. passive

To Be

10. 3rd. per. sing. passive
11. 3rd. per. pl. passive

Subjunctive

Active and Passive

12. 1st. per. sing. give
13. 2nd. per. pl. give
14. 3rd. per. sing. give
15. 3rd. per. pl. give

Potential

Active and Passive

16. 1st. per. sing. give
17. 3rd. per. sing. give
18. 2nd. per. pl. give
19. 3rd. per. pl. give

To Have

Subjunctive

Active and Passive

20. 1st. per. sing.
21. 3rd. per. sing.
22. 2nd. per. pl.
23. 3rd. per. pl.

Potential

Active and Passive

24. 1st. per. sing.
25. 3rd. per. sing.
26. 2nd. per. pl.
27. 3rd. per. pl.

To Do

Subjunctive

Active and Passive

28. 1st. per. sing.
29. 3rd. per. sing.
30. 2nd. per. pl.
31. 3rd. per. pl.

Potential

Active and Passive

32. 1st. per. sing.
33. 3rd. per. sing.
34. 2nd. per. pl.
35. 3rd. per. pl.

To Be

Subjunctive and Potential

Passive

36. 1st. per. sing.
37. 3rd. per. sing.
38. 2nd. per. pl.
39. 3rd. per. pl.

(NOTE.— Only the first 25 tests are required; the remaining tests are optional.)

FORM I
(C. L. 111, 1928-29.)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

VERB TEST

Verb _____	Student _____
Per. _____ No. _____	Date _____
Mode _____	Class _____
Voice _____	Mark _____ Graded by _____

Notice to students: Memorize the names of all the verb forms in each mode that is to be studied by your class; this list is to found on your individual record sheet. There are

- 14 forms in the indicative active
- 8 forms in the indicative passive
- 6 in the subjunctive active
- 2 in the subjunctive passive
- 8 in the potential active
- 4 in the potential passive

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____